



Hon. Robert T. Matsui

Member of Congress

www.house.gov/matsui/

Robert T. Matsui

Serving California's 5th District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, June 17, 2003

CONTACT: JARED ALLEN
(202) 225-7163/(202) 225-0564

REP. MATSUI STATEMENT ON REPUBLICAN MEDICARE PRIVATIZATION PLAN

WASHINGTON, DC—Congressman Robert T. Matsui (D-CA) today issued the following statement on the House Ways and Means Committee mark-up of H.R. 2473, the GOP Medicare bill:

“For far too long, seniors across America have waited for the promise of a prescription drug benefit under Medicare to become a reality. Today, however, we are stepping further away from accomplishing that goal.

“There are no two ways about it; the House Republican bill will end Medicare as we know it. The bill will transform Medicare from a defined-benefit program into one that will have to compete with private insurers. And when that happens, seniors will be forced to either pay more for the same Medicare coverage they have today, or turn to HMOs and private plans where they will not receive any guaranteed coverage at all.

“The Republican bill also fails to provide any drug benefit for seniors with drug costs between \$2,000 and \$5,100, even though these seniors will still have to pay a premium. The coverage gap is so significant that in 2006 -- when the drug benefit actually kicks in -- 48 percent of Medicare beneficiaries who will incur an average of \$3,155 in drug costs will fall into this ‘donut hole.’

“It is no secret that Republicans want to privatize the social safety-net programs that have kept generations of our nations’ most vulnerable citizens from falling into poverty. But we need to strengthen, not dismantle, Social Security and Medicare to ensure that they can continue to provide critical assistance to Americans, both now and well into the future.”

###